

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims by replacing them with the following complete listing:

Claims 1-7. (*Canceled*)

Claim 8. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system comprising:

a ~~cross-country~~ cross-country ski comprising an upper surface including a central zone adapted to receive a device for binding a boot to the ski;

the central zone of the ski comprising a binding zone having a location for receiving the binding device ~~and an upper support surface of the ski~~;

the upper surface of the ski comprising an [[the]] upper support surface of the ski being arranged on at least one of two lateral sides of the location to receive the binding device, the upper support surface being capable of being exposed laterally of the binding zone for coming in direct contact with the boot when a skier using the cross-country ski system exerts a pressure force with the boot toward the ski;

the location for receiving the binding device comprising an upwardly facing recess of the upper surface of the ski.

Claim 9. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:

in the central zone of the ski, at least one lateral shoulder is arranged on one of the two lateral sides of the location for receiving the binding device such that the boot can be supported directly on the shoulder.

Claim 10. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:  
the ski comprises two lateral upper surfaces arranged on respective lateral sides of the location for receiving the binding device.

Claim 11. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 9, wherein:  
the shoulder comprises a support surface for the boot arranged above the upper surface of the location for receiving the binding device.

Claim 12. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:  
the upper support surface of the ski is longitudinally arranged in an area corresponding to a metatarsophalangeal bending zone of the user's foot.

Claim 13. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system ~~according to claim 8, further~~ comprising:

a cross-country ski comprising a central zone adapted to receive a device for binding a boot to the ski;

the central zone of the ski comprising an upper surface including a binding zone having a location for receiving the binding device;

the upper surface of the ski comprising an upper support surface arranged on at least one of two lateral sides of the location to receive the binding device, the upper support surface being exposed laterally of the binding zone for coming in direct contact with the boot when a skier using the cross-country ski system exerts a pressure force;

the location for receiving the binding device comprising an upwardly facing recess of the upper surface of the ski;

a binding device adapted to be fixed on the ski in the location for receiving the binding device, the binding device including a mechanism for engagement with the boot.

Claim 14. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the binding device has, at least in the area of the support surface, a lesser width than a width of the ski.

Claim 15. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the binding device is adapted to be fitted within the recess of the upper surface of the ski;

the binding device has a rib adapted to be positioned within a downwardly facing longitudinal recess in a sole of the boot;

the ~~binding device~~ cross-country ski system includes no baseplate to be mounted upon the ski between the boot and the upper support surface of the ski, so that a lower external surface of the boot is adapted to be directly supported on the upper support surface of the ski is structured and arranged to contact the boot directly when the boot is engaged with the mechanism of the binding device.

Claim 16. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:

~~the ski has,~~ at least in part of the central zone, ~~an upper surface, the a~~ transverse width of ~~[[said]]~~ the upper support surface ~~being is~~ greater than a width of ~~[[the]]~~ a lower gliding surface ~~of the ski.~~

Claim 17. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the mechanism for engagement with the boot ~~the binding device~~ includes a front jaw adapted to engage a front bar of the boot for enabling articulation of the boot with respect to the ski;

the binding device includes an elastic return mechanism, said elastic return mechanism being rearwardly spaced from the front jaw and being adapted to engage a rear bar of the boot for applying an elastic return force to the rear bar.

Claim 18. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the binding device is adapted to be affixed to the ski by being positioned within the recess of the upper surface of the ski;

the binding device has a rib adapted to be positioned within a downwardly facing longitudinal recess in a sole of the boot;

the ~~binding device~~ cross-country ski system includes no baseplate that would prevent a lower external surface of the boot from direct supporting engagement on the upper support surface of the ski.

Claim 19. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 15, further comprising:

a boot having a support surface adapted to be supported directly by said upper support surface of the ski.

Claim 20. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 19, wherein:

said support surface of the boot is in a metatarsophalangeal bending zone of the boot.

Claim 21. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system comprising:

a cross-country ski and a binding device having a mechanism to engage a boot to bind the boot to the ski;

the cross-country ski having a longitudinally extending binding zone spaced from front and rear ends of the ski, said binding zone comprising:

a pair of transversely spaced apart longitudinally extending upper support surfaces ~~adapted~~ structured and arranged to support directly support surfaces of a sole of a boot at least in a metatarsophalangeal bending zone of the boot when the boot is engaged with a mechanism of the binding device for engagement with the boot;

an upwardly open longitudinally extending recess positioned between said pair of upper support surfaces;

at least in the binding zone, the ski has an upper surface width greater than a width of the binding device, thereby exposing the upper support surfaces for direct contact with the sole of the boot on opposite lateral sides of the binding device;

the [[a]] binding device adapted being structured and arranged to be fixed upon the ski in the recess of the binding zone, the binding device having an upwardly projecting rib adapted to be positioned within a downwardly facing longitudinally groove in the sole of the boot. [[;]]

~~at least in the binding zone, the ski has an upper surface width greater than a width of the binding device.~~

Claim 22. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 21, wherein:

the ~~binding device~~ cross-country ski system includes no baseplate that would prevent a lower external surface of the boot from direct supporting engagement on the upper support surfaces of the ski.

Claim 23. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 21, wherein:

the binding device includes a front jaw adapted to engage a front bar of the boot for enabling articulation of the boot with respect to the ski;

the binding device includes an elastic return mechanism, said elastic return mechanism being rearwardly spaced from the front jaw and being adapted to engage a rear bar of the boot for applying an elastic return force to the rear bar.

Claim 24. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 23, further comprising:

a boot having support surfaces adapted to be supported directly by said upper support surfaces of the ski, said boot having said front and rear bars.

Claim 25. (*New*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the binding zone has a length extending lengthwise of the ski;  
continuously, at each lengthwise increment along an entirety of the length of the binding zone, the upper surface of the ski has a width greater than a width of the binding device.

Claim 26. (*New*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 25, wherein:

with the binding device fixed to the ski in the binding zone, the lateral support surface is exposed for direct engagement of a lower surface of the boot during skiing.